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the FINAL CHAPTER PART 1 of 4

THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN®

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STAN LEE PRESENTS: THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN IN

AND WHO SHALL CLAIM A KINGLY CROWN?

NIGHT UNFOLDS ITSELF ACROSS THE CITY OF NEW YORK.

CREEPING OUT OF SHADOWED CORNERS, IT STRETCHES LONG, DARK FINGERS OVER THE JUMBLED SKYLINE AS THE SUN SINKS BELOW THE WESTERN HORIZON.

AND NO SHADOW IS LONGER, OR DARKER, THAN THAT CAST BY THIS TOWER, THE HEADQUARTERS OF OSBORN INDUSTRIES.

UNILLUMINATED NOW, ALL EMPLOYEES HAVING BEEN SENT HOME EARLY, HOURS AGO.

THE LAYERS OF ITS MANY STORIES ARE WRAPPED IN BLACKNESS, STILL AND SILENT, AS THOUGH WAITING FOR A TERRIBLE LIGHT TO BURST UPON THEM.

THE LIGHT, PERHAPS, THAT BURNS LIKE A CYCLOPEAN EYE AT THE VERY PINNACLE OF THIS OBSIDIAN MONOLITH.

THE LIGHT OF MADNESS. THE LIGHT OF DEATH.

the FINAL CHAPTER PART 1 of 4

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YES, MADNESS AND DEATH.
BUT ALSO POWER. KNOWLEDGE. IMMORTALITY!
THREE CHANCES OUT OF FIVE. NOT THE BEST ODDS.
YOU ALL UNDERSTAND THIS? CLEARLY?
OF COURSE THEY DO, MAXWELL. YOUR CONSTANT HARPING ON THAT OBVIOUS POINT SERVES NO PURPOSE HERE.
NO, OSBORN? YOU ARE ASKING EACH OF US TO RISK MADNESS AND DEATH SO THAT THREE OF US MIGHT GAIN POWER, KNOWLEDGE, AND IMMORTALITY. THERE IS NO WAY TO KNOW WHO WILL BE GRANTED WHICH GIFT, WHICH CURSE.
AND EACH OF YOU MUST UNDERSTAND THIS COMPLETELY, MUST MAKE THIS CHOICE WITH AN OPEN HEART, AND CONVICTION OF PURPOSE...
... OR THE SPELL WILL FAIL, AND THE CONSEQUENCES...
ARE NOT WORTH CONSIDERING. WE ALL KNOW WHY WE ARE HERE.
WASTE NO MORE TIME.

AND YOU, ***MARTHA FRANKLIN.*** IT WAS YOUR ***FATHER*** WHO AGREED TO TAKE PLACE IN THIS ***GATHERING.***

YOU TOOK HIS PLACE WHEN HIS ***COURAGE*** FAILED HIM. TOOK HIS PLACE WITHOUT HIS ***KNOWLEDGE*** OR ***CONSENT.***

CALL ME ***"MATT".*** ALL MY ***FRIENDS*** DO.

I'LL CALL YOU ***FOOL,*** CHILD.

HOW CAN ONE WHO HAS YET TO LIVE EVEN TWO FULL DECADES UNDERSTAND WHAT IS BEING ***ASKED*** OF HER HERE?

IF SHE SAYS SHE UNDERSTANDS, SHE UNDERSTANDS, MAXWELL. STOP TRYING TO ***FRIGHTEN*** HER.

HE CAN'T.

I MAY NOT KNOW ALL THE ***MUMBO-JUMBO*** YOU CLOWNS ARE COOKING HERE -- BUT I KNOW IF I ***PLAY*** THIS ***GAME,*** MY CHANCES ARE AS GOOD AS ***ANY*** OF YOU OF COMING OUT ON TOP.

AND OLD MAN, I WOULD RISK ***ANYTHING*** TO GET OUT FROM UNDER MY FATHER'S ***THUMB!***

WELL SAID... MATT I HAD MY ***DOUBTS*** WHEN I SAW YOU...

"... BUT I THINK NOW YOU WILL BE A ***MOST WORTHY*** ADDITION TO OUR ***GATHERING."***

THERE'S THE ***PARKER*** HOUSE. STOP HERE, DRIVER.

WHY SO FAR BACK?

WE HAVE EVERY REASON TO THINK ***OSBORN*** KNOWS WHERE YOU'RE HEADED, ***ALISON.***

IT COULD ONLY HAVE BEEN ***HIM*** WHO HAD THE ***MOLTEN MAN*** TRY TO ***INTERCEPT*** US AT THE DOCKS...

TAXI

IN OUR LAST ISSUE -- – Last Ralf.

WE'D BE ***FOOLS*** TO ASSUME HE'S NOT HAVING THIS PLACE ***WATCHED*** TWENTY-FOUR/ HOURS!

PERHAPS.

OR -- PERHAPS HE WILL HAVE ***LOST INTEREST*** BY NOW. HE WORKED SO ***HARD*** TO ***ACCOMPLISH*** HIS ***DECEPTION.***

PERHAPS HE WILL ASSUME ***PETER PARKER*** WILL NOT ***BELIEVE*** WHAT I HAVE TO TELL HIM.

AND I SUPPOSE IT WOULD BE POINTLESS TO MENTION, ONCE AGAIN, THAT I DON'T KNOW WHAT THAT IS...

COMPLETELY. MY WORDS ARE FOR THE EARS OF PETER PARKER ALONE.

BUT... WHAT IS THAT ***STEAM..?***

THE SEWERS SOMETIMES STEAM LIKE THAT IN THE MORNING. BUT I WOULD THINK IT WAS TOO ***WARM*** RIGHT NOW FOR...

THE MOLTEN MAN!
AH-GH!

A HEARTBEAT OR TWO AGO, SEVERAL MILES AWAY...

... A FAMILIAR FIGURE ARCS OVER THE CRAGGY FACE OF MANHATTAN, FEELING IN HIS BONES AND MUSCLES THE WEARINESS THAT MARKS THE END OF A **LONG DAY.**

OKAY, I'M ***DONE!***

DOESN'T LOOK LIKE THERE ARE ANY ***BAD GUYS*** WHO NEED MY IMMEDIATE ATTENTION.

NO ***CATS*** CAUGHT IN ***TREES,*** NO ***PRESIDENTIAL AIRPLANES*** TO BE ***RESCUED.***

SO I'LL HEAD FOR ***HOME*** AND A NICE, WARM, COZY ***BED.***

NOT TO MENTION A NICE, WARM, COZY ***WIFE...***

Oh, ***JILL,*** IT WAS ***INCREDIBLE!***

I THOUGHT I HADN'T ***MISSED*** THE ***LIFE,*** BUT THE MOMENT I STEPPED BACK INTO IT...

Er.. HOLD ON A MINUTE, WOULD YOU?

IT SOUNDS LIKE THERE'S SOMETHING GOING ON RIGHT IN FRONT OF THE...

...OH MY GOSH!

ALISON!
HOW BAD...
BAD... ENOUGH...
PARKER... GET PARKER.
I CAN'T GET PAST THE MOLTEN MAN CARRYING YOU -- AND I CAN'T JUST *LEAVE* YOU...
... ROBERTSON ...
YOU CAN *SPEAK?* WHEN YOU ATTACKED US AT THE DOCKS, I GOT THE IMPRESSION YOU'D LOST THAT PARTICULAR TALENT.
HEAD... HURTING.
SOMEONE... PUT... SOMETHING...
"... PUT SOMETHING... *IN* MY HEAD..."
DON'T BOTHER *STRUGGLING*, RAXTON. THOSE *STRAPS* WOULD HOLD EVEN *SPIDER-MAN.*
WHO..?
WHAT'S GOING ON HERE? I WAS AT MY DESK... GETTING READY TO LEAVE FOR THE NIGHT...

YES -- SUCH A ***LOYAL*** AND ***DEVOTED*** EMPLOYEE YOU'VE BEEN, RAXTON.

ALWAYS ON TIME. STAYING LATE. WORKING HARD.

WH-WHAT'S THAT? WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

NOTHING WITH WHICH YOU NEED OVERLY ***CONCERN*** YOURSELF, RAXTON.

IN FACT, IN JUST ANOTHER ***MOMENT...***

HEY! LET GO!

... NOTHING WILL ***EVER*** CONCERN YOU AGAIN!

AH-GH!

NOW, JUST LIE ***QUIETLY*** FOR A MOMENT...

WHAT DID YOU ***DO*** TO ME? MY ***BRAIN...*** IT FEELS AS IF MY BRAIN IS ***ON FIRE!***

NOT ***YET,*** RAXTON. BUT IT SOON ***WILL*** BE!

ALONG WITH THE ***REST*** OF YOU.

NO! YOU'RE TURNING ME BACK INTO THE ***MOLTEN MAN!***

DON'T ***PLEASE!*** I ***BEG*** OF YOU!

GNAH-AHHH!

TOO LATE FOR THAT, RAXTON. TOO LATE FOR ANYTHING, EXCEPT MY NEED FOR YOUR SPECIAL SERVICES.

RAAHHH!

YES -- YOU MAY FIND YOUR ***VOCABULARY*** SOMEWHAT ***REDUCED***, RAXTON.

AN UNFORTUNATE ***SIDE EFFECT*** OF THE DEVICE I HAVE ***IMPLANTED*** IN YOUR BRAIN.

HURRHHH..!

ALL OF YOUR THOUGHTS, ALL OF YOUR MOTOR ACTIVITIES WILL NOW BE DIRECTED TOWARD A ***SINGLE GOAL***, RAXTON.

THERE IS A SMALL ***HOMING DEVICE*** SOMEWHERE IN THIS CITY. IT WILL ***DRAW*** YOU TOWARD IT, IRRESISTIBLY, INEXORABLY. AND THE ***CLOSER*** YOU GET, THE GREATER WILL BE YOUR ***PAIN***.

UNTIL THE PAIN BECOMES ***SO GREAT*** THE ONLY ***THOUGHT*** LEFT TO YOU WILL BE THE ***DESTRUCTION*** OF THE SOURCE OF YOUR ***PAIN***.

RAARGH!

FOOL! YOUR POWER IS *NOTHING* COMPARED TO MINE!

YOUR *STRENGTH* IS *NOTHING*. YOUR *INTELLECT* IS *NOTHING*.

NOW *GET OUT OF MY SIGHT!*

GO AND DO WHAT I HAVE *PROGRAMMED* YOU TO DO!

HER! IT'S HER!

SHE'S THE ONE *INSIDE* MY *HEAD!* SHE'S THE ONE *HURTING* ME!

ALISON -- WHAT IN *BLAZES* IS HE TALKING ABOUT..?

I DON'T KNOW... I DON'T KNOW...

UNLESS THIS LOCKET... *OSBORN* GAVE IT TO ME. SO LONG AGO. I'D ALMOST FORGOTTEN.

OSBORN..?

Oh, FOR GOD'S SAKE! NO *WONDER* WE'VE BEEN BARELY ELUDING OSBORN'S PEOPLE EVERY *STEP* OF THE *WAY!*

YOU'VE BEEN CARRYING A *TRACKING* DEVICE!

AND THAT POOR *DEVIL* HAS NO CHOICE BUT TO *FOLLOW* IT!

URGH-GHH!

PAIN...

IT... SEEMS TO HAVE WORKED.

HE'S CALMED DOWN -- ALMOST ***DOCILE.***

...ROBERTSON...

...GONE...

...TIME'S UP...

...ALL... THE...TIME... IS...UP...

ALISON! YOU MUST TELL ***ME*** NOW! TELL ME WHAT YOU HAD TO TELL ***PETER!***

PETER..?

ROBBIE -- WHO ***IS*** THIS WOMAN? WHAT'S GOING ***ON..?***

MORE THAN WE HAVE TIME TO TELL, MARY JANE.

I'VE CHASED OVER ***HALF*** THE ***WORLD*** WITH THIS WOMAN, BECAUSE SHE HAD A ***MESSAGE*** SHE WOULD DELIVER ONLY TO YOUR ***HUSBAND.*** NOW...

...HUSBAND...

YOU'RE... THE *WIFE*...

YOU... YOU CAN KNOW...

YOU... CAN... BE... TOLD...

N-NO..!! ***NO!***

IT *CAN'T* BE..!

MARY JANE WHAT IS IT? WHAT DID SHE *SAY..?*

Ohhhh, ROBBIE!

SHE SAID... SHE SAID...

SHE SAID ***MAY*** IS ***ALIVE..!***

"WHAT THE ***DEVIL*** ARE YOU ***DOING,*** GIRL?"

WHAT DOES IT *LOOK* LIKE I'M DOING? I'M *READING.*

I HAVE TO DO *SOMETHING* TO FILL MY TIME WHILE YOU *OLD PEOPLE* DRONE ON AND *ON* AND *ON* AND *ON*...

LIFESTYLE

I CAN *SEE* THAT, GIRL!

WHY ARE YOUR READING THIS... THIS... *GARBAGE!*

OW!

HEY, *LIGHTEN UP,* OSBORN! I *LIKE* SPIDER-MAN! I DON'T CARE *WHAT* ANYONE ELSE SAYS.

I THINK HE'S *COOL!*

... COOL ...

Oh... I *KNOW,* MARTHA. I KNOW ALL *TOO WELL* WHAT THAT WALL-CRAWLING *MENACE* IS *"ALL ABOUT."*

NOW *GET BACK* INTO MY *OFFICE.* THE *CEREMONY* IS ABOUT TO *BEGIN.*

WELL -- ABOUT TIME..!

SURE! BUT I WOULDN'T EXPECT *YOU* TO SEE THAT, OSBORN. I WOULDN'T EXPECT *ANYONE* OVER THE AGE OF *TWENTY-ONE* TO SEE IT!

YOU'RE ALL TOO *OLD* TO *GET* WHAT SPIDER-MAN IS ALL ABOUT!

THERE YOU ARE! WE WERE *WONDERING*...

DO YOU HAVE YOUR *SHARD*, MARTHA? THE TIME WILL BE UPON US IN *SECONDS*.

YEAH, I'VE GOT IT. LET'S GET THIS *SHOW* ON THE *ROAD!*

DON'T BRING THE SHARDS TOO CLOSE TOGETHER, YET! WE DON'T WANT TO *DILUTE* THE ENERGY PREMATURELY!

ENERGY SUCH AS THIS *CANNOT* BE *"DILUTED"*, MAXWELL. YOU SHOULD *KNOW* THAT.

HE *DOES*, MADAME WEB. IT IS MERELY ANOTHER MANIFESTATION OF HIS CONSTANT *WHINING*.

BOY, I'M GLAD WE DON'T HAVE THE *GET ALONG* TO MAKE THIS THING *WORK!*

HEY! LOOK AT THE LIGHT SHOW!

IS THAT THE *SIGN?* IS IT *TIME?*

TIME AND *PAST* TIME!

LET THE ENERGY FLOW *THROUGH* YOU! OPEN YOUR *MIND!* OPEN YOUR *SOUL!*

I *FEEL* IT! LIKE *RAW EMOTION!* LOVE! HATE! FEAR! ENVY! ALL IN ONE PLACE!

WOW!

THE *CENTER PIECE* MUST BE SET IN PLACE *FIRST.*

I KNOW THAT, MAXWELL! WE *ALL* KNOW WHAT WE HAVE TO *DO!*

MADAME WEB... BY THE *LUCK* OF THE *DRAW,* YOU HAVE BEEN *CHOSEN* TO GO *FIRST...*

YES... I PLACE MY *SHARD* IN THE *MARKED SPACE* NEXT TO THE *CENTER...*

Oh-hhh...

MADAME WEB!!

AGGGG!

TH- THERE'S NO *PULSE..!*

THEN THE FIRST *GIFT* IS *DEATH!* AND IT HAS *TAKEN* MADAME WEB!

WHICH SHOULD BE SOMETHING OF A *RELIEF* TO THE REST OF US!

GEEZ, OSBORN! COULD YOU BE, LIKE, *MORE* OF A COLD-BLOODED *RAT?*

OKAY -- ONE CHANCE IN *FOUR* NOW TO GO *CRAZY...*

LET'S SEE WHAT I *GET!*

CHILD..? WHAT... WHAT DO YOU ***FEEL***..?

N-NOTHING. JUST... JUST A LITTLE ***BUZZ*** IN MY FINGERTIPS. A LITTLE LIGHT-HEADEDNESS...

OVERPOWER -- PUT YOUR SHARD IN PLACE!

MY LORD!

I FEEL LIKE ***EVERY CELL*** IN MY BODY IS ***EXPLODING!***

WHAT IS IT? NOT THE ***POWER!*** HE DID NOT GET THE ***POWER!***

I... I DON'T ***THINK*** SO. I JUST FEEL... SUDDENLY VERY ***CALM***... ALMOST... ***ISOLATED*** FROM EVERYTHING ELSE...

IMMORTALITY! THAT MUST BE WHAT YOU FEEL! THE REACTION OF YOUR CELLS, AND NOW UTTER CALM.

YOU HAVE BEEN GIVEN THE GIFT OF ***ETERNAL LIFE!***

AND I AM ***BETTING*** WHAT ***MARTHA*** HAS BEEN GIVEN IS ***KNOWLEDGE!*** THE LIGHT-HEADEDNESS SHE FEELS IS HER ***MIND*** BEING ***EXPANDED*** TO CONTAIN ALL THE ***WISDOM*** OF THE UNIVERSE!

WHICH LEAVES ONLY ***MADNESS*** AND ***POWER***...

AND I CLAIM THE POWER!

NOOO!

AH-GH! MY BRAIN! MY BRAIN!

MADNESS!

...MY MIND... ON FIRE... MY MIND...

THE POWER IS MINE!

YES! YES!

I CAN FEEL IT!

MY MIND! MY BODY! EXPANDING IN TEN THOUSAND DIRECTIONS AT ONCE!

OSBORN! NO! YOU DON'T...

SILENCE, GIRL! I HAVE ***NO MORE TIME*** TO ***WASTE*** WITH ***INSIGNIFICANT CHATTEL*** LIKE YOU!

TONIGHT I GAIN AT LAST MY ***LIFETIME'S AMBITION!***

AND TONIGHT THE ***GREEN GOBLIN*** WILL ***CLAIM ALL!***

AND, FAR FROM THE CENTER OF THIS NEW AND TERRIBLE **STORM**...

YOU **SURE** YOU'LL BE ALL RIGHT, MARY JANE? I COULD...

NO... ROBBIE, THANKS. I'M OKAY. REALLY.

AND IF **HALF** OF WHAT YOU'VE TOLD ME IS **TRUE**, YOU NEED TO GET HOME TO YOUR OWN **FAMILY!**

YOU'RE RIGHT. IT'S BEEN A **LONG** TIME.

YOU HAVE MY NUMBER. YOU KNOW WHERE TO REACH ME...

YES. THANKS.

AND GOD BLESS, ROBBIE. YOU'RE A GOOD, GOOD FRIEND.

NYPD

I THOUGHT THEY'D **NEVER** LEAVE.

YOU OKAY, BABE? WHAT THE HECK HAS BEEN...

PETER!

YOUR **TIMING** COULDN'T BE BETTER!

IT'S BEEN **MADNESS! MADNESS!**

WHAT...?

THAT'S WHAT SHE SAID. THAT ***MAY*** IS ***ALIVE*** -- THAT ***OSBORN*** IS ***HOLDING*** HER AT HIS ***HUNTING LODGE.***

WHAT?!

I ***KNOW*** THAT PLACE! IT'S UPSTATE -- MAYBE TWO HOURS FROM HERE.

I CAN BE THERE IN EVEN ***LESS...***

PETER! ***NO!***

"NO?" NORMAN OSBORN HAS OUR ***DAUGHTER*** -- AND YOU SAY ***"NO"?***

YES! I SAY ***NO,*** PETER!

DON'T YOU ***SEE?*** DON'T YOU ***GET*** IT?

THIS IS JUST OSBORN ***MESSING*** WITH US AGAIN! ***PLAYING*** WITH US! THIS IS PROBABLY SOMETHING HE SET IN MOTION THE ***DAY*** MAY DIED!

BUT -- BUT SHE'S ***NOT*** DEAD! DON'T ***YOU*** SEE, MJ? THIS IS ***EXACTLY*** THE SORT OF THING ***OSBORN*** WOULD DO!

STEAL OUR ***BABY!*** HOLD HER FOR ***GOD KNOWS*** HOW LONG. ***GOD KNOWS*** WHAT ***PURPOSE!***

BUT HIS ***PLAN*** HAS ***FAILED!*** LIKE THEY ***ALWAYS*** DO!

BECAUSE THAT ***MONGRAIN*** WOMAN GOT ***WORD*** TO YOU!

NO, PETER! NO!

THIS IS OSBORN'S PLAN! TO BREAK OUR HEARTS ONE MORE TIME! TO STRETCH OUR EMOTIONS LIKE SOMEONE BEING TORTURED ON A RACK!

AND I WON'T LET HIM DO IT! NOT THIS TIME! NOT EVER AGAIN!

YOU CAN'T MEAN THAT! YOU... YOU DON'T EVEN WANT TO CHECK..?

THERE'S NOTHING TO CHECK, PETER!

MY BABY IS DEAD! I KNOW! I FELT HER DIE!

DON'T PUT ME THROUGH THAT -- DON'T PUT US THROUGH THAT ALL OVER AGAIN!

HAVE IT HOWEVER YOU WANT IT, THEN, MARY JANE. YOU STAY HERE. YOU REFUSE TO BELIEVE.

BUT I'M GOING. I HAVE TO GO.

I'LL GO MAD IF I DON'T GO!

Oh... PETER... PETER...

DON'T LET HIM DO THIS TO YOU AGAIN!

TO BE CONTINUED -- IN PETER PARKER #97!

Shadowcat